CLAIMS

We claim:

1   1. A method of correlating a purchaser of an electronically-purchased item ("EPI")

2   with the EPI, said EPI to be subsequently received by said purchaser, comprising:

3   a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial and digital certificate

4   information is transferred to a seller of said EPI and verification-related digital certificate

5   information is transferred to said purchaser; and

6   a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said EPI are correlated by requiring

7   said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate information before

8   receiving said EPI and by electronically comparing said verification-related digital

9   certificate information with said EPI.

1   2. The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein said purchasing step includes at least

2   the steps of:

3   creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related

4   digital certificate information; and

5   associating said electronically-readable indicia with said EPI.

1   3. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said verification step comprises:

2   electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from

3   said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said EPI;

4   and

5   comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with

6   verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to

7   receive the EPI.

1   4. The method as set forth in claim 3, wherein the EPI is authorized to be released

2   to said person attempting to receive the EPI only after the EPI is confirmed to have

3   associated therewith verification-related digital certificate information corresponding to the

4   verification-related digital certificate information provided by said receiving party.

1   5.   The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises an encrypted data file containing personal data pertaining

3   to said purchaser.

1   6.   The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said

3   EPI.

1   7.   The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said digital certificate

2   information comprises an encrypted data file containing personal data pertaining to said

3   purchaser and data pertaining to said EPI.

1   8. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said purchaser-related digital

2   certificate information is provided by data stored on a smart card.

1   9. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said purchaser-related digital

2   certificate information is supplied from data stored on a PDA.

1   10. The method as set forth in claim 4, wherein said purchaser-related information

2   is supplied from data stored on a cellular telephone.

1   11. The method as set forth in claim 2, wherein said electronically-readable indicia

2   comprises bar coding.

1   12. A method of correlating a purchased item to be picked up by a purchaser with

2   the purchaser of the item, comprising the steps of:

3   transferring indicia of verification-related digital certificate information to the

4   purchased item;

5   requiring said purchaser to present said verification-related digital certificate

6   information upon picking up said item; and

7   correlating said purchased item with the purchaser of the item by electronically

8   comparing said verification-related digital certificate information presented by said

9   purchaser with said indicia.

1   13.   A method of correlating a purchased redeemable ticket (PRD) with the

2   purchaser of the redeemable ticket, comprising:

3   a purchasing step, wherein purchaser-related financial and digital certificate

4   information is transferred to a seller of said PRD and verification-related digital certificate

5   information is transferred to said purchaser; and

6   a verification step, wherein said purchaser and said PRD are correlated by requiring

7   said purchaser to provide said verification-related digital certificate information before

8   receiving said PRD and by electronically comparing said verification-related digital

9   certificate information with said PRD.

1   14.   The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said purchasing step includes

2   at least the steps of:

3   creating an electronically-readable indicia corresponding to said verification-related

4   digital certificate information; and

5   associating said electronically-readable indicia with said PRD.

1   15. The method as set forth in claim 14, wherein said verification step comprises:

2   electronically reading said verification-related digital certificate information from

3   said electronically-readable indicia into a verification system prior to receiving said PRD;

4   and

5   comparing said read verification-related digital certificate information with

6   verification-related digital certificate information provided by a person attempting to

7   receive the PRD.

1   16. The method as set forth in claim 15, wherein the PRD is authorized to be

2   released to said person attempting to receive the PRD only after the PRD is confirmed to

3   have associated therewith verification-related digital certificate information corresponding

4   to the verification-related digital certificate information provided by said receiving party.

1   17.   The method as set forth in claim 16, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises an encrypted data file containing personal data pertaining

3   to said purchaser.

1   18.   The method as set forth in claim 16, wherein said verification-related digital

2   certificate information comprises a data file containing encrypted data pertaining to said

3   PRD.

1   19.   The method as set forth in claim 16, wherein said digital certificate

2   information comprises an encrypted data file containing personal data pertaining to said

3   purchaser and data pertaining to said PRD.

1   20.   The method as set forth in claim 16, wherein said purchaser-related digital

2   certificate information is provided by data stored on a smart card.

1   21.   The method as set forth in claim 16, wherein said purchaser-related digital

2   certificate information is supplied from data stored on a PDA.

1   22.   The method as set forth in claim 16, wherein said purchaser-related information

2   is supplied from data stored on a cellular telephone.

1   23.   The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein said electronically-readable

2   indicia comprises bar coding.